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Chairman: Mr. Asadi ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 94: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*) (A/53/25, A/53/72–S/1998/156, A/53/95–S/1998/311, A/53/96, A/53/156–S/1998/78, A/53/165–S/1998/601, A/53/371–S/1998/848, A/53/416, A/53/425 and A/53/487)

(b) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (*continued*) (A/53/449)

(c) Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*) (A/53/65 E/1998/5, A/53/358)

(d) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*) (A/53/451)

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa *(continued)* (A53/516)

1. Mr. Eghlim (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. With reference to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, he said that the developed countries should fulfil their commitments in terms of technology transfer and the provision of new and additional resources, which were essential for the implementation of those conventions. In the case of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, less than one year after the Kyoto meeting, the annex I countries still had not met their commitments satisfactorily, a matter of particular concern inasmuch as the developing countries were being subjected to pressure to undertake new commitments. It must be reaffirmed that the implementation of the Convention was based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. It was also essential to observe the principles of non-discrimination and the equality of all States parties to the Convention. In the case of the Convention on Biological Diversity, his delegation considered that the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties had represented an important step towards the fulfilment of international commitments, which would facilitate action at the national level. Countries with low forest cover should be actively involved in the forest biological diversity work programme, and the Conference of the Parties should work closely with the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests on that issue and should consider including the results of their efforts in the forest biological diversity work programme.

2. Lastly, he noted that the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was languishing for want of financial resources and technical assistance. Desertification, with its adverse effects on agriculture, had a particularly serious impact on the poorest segment of the rural community. His delegation regarded the Convention as the most important international mechanism for helping developing countries deal with the problem and noted with satisfaction the growing numbers of countries that had acceded to or ratified it. The conclusion of a headquarters agreement with Germany and the establishment of a facilitation committee to promote cooperation among the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank were also welcome developments. For want of resources, however, the global mechanism of the Convention had not begun to operation in January 1998 as originally scheduled. Contributions from the international community and all other sources were essential to making the global mechanism operational and implementing the Convention.

3. His delegation supported the inclusion of the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies in the United Nations calendar of conferences and meetings for the biennium 1998–1999, with the conference servicing costs arising from sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies to be funded from the regular budget for the duration of the institutional linkage between the secretariat of the Convention and the United Nations.

4. **Mr. Shukri** (Malaysia) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Malaysia, like other countries of the Association of South-East Asian nations (ASEAN), had had to face serious environmental hazards arising from forest fires. The problem had been overcome through action at the national and regional levels, with the help of the international community. On 30 July 1998, the Ministers of the Environment of the ASEAN countries had held their fifth meeting in Kuala Lumpur. They had agreed to remain vigilant and had reviewed the fire-fighting action plan developed by ASEAN, which included the acquisition of a new satellite data reception and processing system, the establishment of a fire-fighting research centre in Indonesia

and joint fire-fighting exercises. On 16 October 1998, a memorandum of understanding had been signed between ASEAN and the Government of Australia for the implementation of a joint initiative aimed at strengthening the Association's capacity to prevent and mitigate transboundary atmospheric pollution.

5. Malaysia considered the Kyoto Protocol a historic step forward in combating climate change, although it would have liked to see more ambitious targets set. It hoped that the political will that had prevailed at the third session of the Conference of the Parties would continue to prevail at the fourth session. It was concerned that media campaigns were suggesting that the developing countries were not being asked to assume their environmental responsibilities. The developed countries should take the lead, since they were responsible for the bulk of past and present emissions. Malaysia reiterated its adherence to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

6. The programme of work of the two subsidiary bodies, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, should be considered. His delegation would also like to see an early agreement on the three mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol, namely, the emission trading mechanism, the joint implementation mechanism and the clean development mechanism. It hoped that the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties would result in agreement on financial resources and practical steps on technology transfer. Malaysia intended to contribute actively to the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. At the national level, it was continuing to encourage the rational use of energy, research on renewable energy sources and the enhancement of "sinks". It was particularly interested in the issue of forests and had participated in the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests in Geneva. It would continue to contribute to the attainment of the objectives set at the Forum, and looked forward to working with Canada and Costa Rica in their initiative to hold a series of intersessional meetings to facilitate discussion on a legally binding instrument, a convention on forests.

7. His delegation wished to emphasize that Malaysia had already implemented several of the action proposals of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests. In 1994 it had established a National Committee on Sustainable Forest Management to apply the criteria and indicators of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). His delegation reiterated its conviction that an international forest convention would provide for an equitable and transparent mechanism for ensuring the sustainable management of all types of forests.

8. Malaysia noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General had recommended, in his report, that future El Niño events should receive the highest priority in disaster management. It looked forward to the holding, in 1999, of a special session of the General Assembly to review and assess the Barbados Programme of Action.

9. **Mr. Mathu** (United Nations Development Programme) noted that UNDP was supporting the implementation of Agenda 21, including the work on desertification and drought, and was working to promote synergies between the various international programmes, especially through support for their implementation at country level, in the overall context of its sustainable human development mandate. Addressing climate change was an important issue for UNDP because it was the developing world that would probably be hardest hit by altered weather patterns, changes in food production and rising sea levels. Increasing end-use energy efficiency, the use of renewable energy sources and new technologies and supporting suitable land and forestry management practices were essential priorities in alleviating poverty and promoting sustainable economic growth. Desertification demonstrated the inextricable linkage between natural resource management and social, economic and political dimensions. An increasing number of UNDP programmes gave attention to dryland management and the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. A recent study showed that some 23 per cent of 113 countries surveyed had included desertification-related components in their country cooperation frameworks. That figure rose to 39 per cent in the case of the African countries and 60 per cent in the case of the Arab States.

10. Since the adoption of the Convention, many countries had been committing UNDP core resources to their national action programmes. Non-core programmes within UNDP were also programming support for the implementation of the Convention. The Office to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNSO) was coordinating UNDP's efforts and had provided technical and financial support for the implementation of the Convention in 49 countries since 1995. The bulk of the support had gone to Africa, while support to Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Arab States had been intensified.

11. At the national level, 23 African countries had launched national action programmes with the support of UNDP. Many had defined priority programmes focusing on efforts to combat desertification and drought at national and local levels. Emphasis had been placed on capacity-building,

including training and strengthening stakeholder participation, and in 10 countries community-based pilot programmes had been launched. UNSO support had recently been extended to seven Arab countries and, in Latin America and the Caribbean, support had been extended to 10 countries, the goal being chiefly to forge partnerships between civil society and Governments. In Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, eight countries were being aided by UNSO. At the subregional level, action programmes had been launched in four subregions in Africa and two subregions of Latin America and the Caribbean. All those programmes were underpinned by thematic and intersectoral programmes and initiatives, integrated, as appropriate, into national and subregional action programmes.

12. At the global level, the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism had been designated by the Administrator in consultation with IFAD and had taken up his duties. The facilitation committee to support the work of the Global Mechanism, composed of IFAD, the World Bank and UNDP, had met twice. During its second meeting, held in July, it had been decided to expand the Committee to include four regional development banks, the GEF secretariat and the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism.

13. The Trust Fund to Combat Desertification and Drought continued to support dryland management and drought mitigation. It had received some generous contributions, amounting to $14.5 million. Contributions had not, however, increased sufficiently, hindering UNDP's ability to support affected countries in the implementation of the Convention.

14. In order to fully implement the Convention there was a need to create synergies with other programmes such as the environmental action plans, the other conventions and the socio-economic strategies and programmes. Adequate priority must also be attributed to combating desertification and obtaining the necessary financial resources. It was important also to create reliable partnerships.

15. UNDP's efforts had focused on assisting countries to launch their action programmes and complementary pilot and thematic activities. Future efforts would need to focus on the integration of the issue into all relevant programmes and on building strategic partnerships at all levels. UNDP would seek to integrate anti-desertification into core programmes, strengthen collaboration and coordination between units and make greater use of GEF.

16. **Mr. Blankson** (Nigeria) endorsed the statements made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He pointed out that the Earth Summit had made everyone more acutely aware that protection of the environment and sustainable development were inextricably linked to the protection of life in general and human life in particular, and that a protected global climate was essential to the survival of present and future generations. At Rio, Governments and organizations had made sincere and concerted efforts to identify the causes of climate change and to undertake equitable remedial action which took into account the varying capacities of countries and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. It was disquieting to note that that community of views had been steadily undermined, from the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the third. But the objectives of Rio would never be achieved if people forgot that most of the emissions of greenhouse gases were directly traceable to the developed countries, which accordingly had pledged that they would assume their responsibilities and provide the developing countries with technical and financial assistance, in order to enable the latter to contribute to the attainment of those goals, and that all the parties had recognized that for the developing countries those goals were indissolubly linked to economic growth, eradication of poverty and the right to development. It was contrary to the goals of Rio and of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and thus to the collective obligations of all countries to present and future generations, to try, six years later, to assign equally the liabilities and obligations among parties whose resources were not equal. Nigeria hoped that the developed countries would soon find satisfactory solutions which would enable them by 2008 to reduce their overall emissions of greenhouse gases to at least 5 per cent below 1990 levels, as called for by the Kyoto Protocol.

17. Nigeria had ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and attached all the more importance to its implementation because it was itself affected by drought. It was gratifying to note the number of countries that had ratified the Convention and it welcomed the signing of the headquarters agreement with the Government of Germany. It hoped that at its second session, which would be held in Dakar in November and December 1998, the Conference of the Parties would enjoy the full support of all concerned in monitoring progress and promoting cooperation, scientific and technical research and the financial and technical support which were essential to the local communities in order to combat desertification. He hoped that the Convention would receive financial support for the duration of its institutional linkage with the United Nations, as the Conference of the Parties had requested at its first session.

18. **Mr. Don Nanjira** (World Meteorological Organization) said that no negotiating process could succeed without the resolute will to translate words into actions. He recalled that the issues under discussion formed a major part of the mandate of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and that they were of crucial importance since human survival depended upon them. In fact, three quarters of natural disasters were related to climatic and meteorological conditions. Climate change, combined with global warming or other phenomena caused substantial deterioration in the natural environment and, as far as people were concerned, degradation of socio-economic conditions, material damage, health problems and losses of human lives. That was why so many conferences had been convened, producing so many international instruments, action programmes and strategies which were now being implemented, particularly the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World, the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. WMO was participating actively in their implementation, alongside other bodies both within and outside the United Nations system. WMO recognized the fact that the primary responsibility for development lay with the Member States and that measures taken by the international community should support and complement the efforts of the Member States so as to extend their scope and facilitate their ownership of all aspects of their development. All initiatives by members of the international community, irrespective of their capacities and mandates, should have as their lowest common denominator the sustainable development of the Member States, and in particular the developing countries; there was only one route to sustainable development, and that was through the economic and social development of Member States and protection of the environment and natural resources. It was high time to reassess the ways in which science and technology could contribute to sustainable development. In fact, its objectives would be attained more rapidly if the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development were translated into concrete and complete actions.

19. The Director of the Secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction had raised many of the points which WMO would like to see incorporated in a resolution relating to implementation of General Assembly resolution 52/200. WMO assured the Secretariat of the Decade of its collaboration and support, and would be involved in the preparation of the events planned for July 1999 and beyond for the end of the Decade. WMO would continue to play an active role in the Inter-agency Task Force on El Niño and considered that it was imperative for the international community to prepare for the twenty-first century in terms of disaster prevention and mitigation. As for protection of the global climate and implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, WMO would continue to work with the relevant agencies of the United Nations system and other partners. It would pursue the improvement of the regional and global observation networks of the climate system, and the enhancement of national meteorological and hydrological systems. WMO hoped that at the fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Buenos Aires in November 1998, there would be a clear will to implement the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, and that special treatment would be given to the developing countries, given their vulnerability. The small island developing States should be protected against a number of risks: the disappearance of their tourist industries, natural disasters, especially the rising sea-level resulting from global warming, and other disasters, including those due to technology, which had serious consequences socio-economically and ecologically. WMO would work to facilitate their development and give them more resources with which to prevent disasters. WMO believed that it was important to prepare well for the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the small island developing States, to be held in New York in September 1999. Under the Convention to Combat Desertification, WMO would continue to help the countries that were vulnerable to drought and desertification, in collaboration with the relevant international organizations and the countries concerned. It underscored on the need to provide special treatment for the regions severely affected by drought and desertification. WMO was continuing to cooperate closely with the Executive Secretary and Interim Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification, and hoped that the second Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be held in November and December 1998 in Dakar, would take concrete measures to further its implementation.

20. **Mr. Fahmy** (Egypt) said that his country which, like others in Africa, suffered from desertification, accorded great importance to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and considered that attention should be given to the inadequacy of the resources allocated to its implementation and that the procedures for financing the Global Mechanism should be reconsidered with a view to providing it with the means to discharge its responsibilities

effectively. His delegation noted with concern that the Global Mechanism had not begun to carry out the tasks assigned to it although it was supposed to have begun by 1 January 1998, in accordance with the decision taken at the first session of the Conference of the Parties held in Rome. As the Ambassador of Benin had said, Africa had already assumed its responsibilities, and had started to combat desertification at national and regional levels, whereas the industrialized countries had not discharged their financial obligations in terms of financing the implementation of the Convention.

21. His delegation thanked Senegal for hosting the second session of the Conference of the Parties, and was awaiting with some impatience the discussions that would be held, especially regarding the procedures for participation in the Global Environment Fund for financing projects dealing with desertification which were related to the other environmental matters with which the Global Environment Fund was concerned.

22. His delegation recognized that the General Assembly had made specific and pertinent recommendations in its resolution S/19-2, and that it had *inter alia* recommended that the parties to the Conventions signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development or as a result of it, as well as to other conventions related to sustainable development, should cooperate in exploring ways and means of collaborating in their work to advance the effective implementation of those Conventions. There should be a scientific assessment of the ecological linkages in cooperation with the Conferences of the Parties to the relevant conventions and their policy-making bodies; it was a role fulfilled by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), with the comparative advantage it had both technically and scientifically. Firstly, the linkages should be defined and agreement reached on them at the level of the Conference of the Parties and of the General Assembly. Secondly, the linkages must contribute to enhancing operational coordination in cross-sectoral areas. The study should not end up merely assigning an order of priority to the Conventions, because that would not be productive. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Framework Convention on Climate Change both fell within the mandate of the General Assembly, whereas the Convention on Biological Diversity fell within the mandate of UNEP. Drawing up budgets for the three Conventions differed from one to the other, especially with regard to the difficult financial situation which had given rise to the Convention to Combat Desertification. Thirdly, whatever the outcome of the discussions on ecological linkages, it must respect the terms of reference of UNEP and the Commission on Sustainable Development, as required by the Nairobi Declaration and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. Fourthly, it was necessary to take into account the Second Committee's consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements (A/53/463).

23. Finally, he expressed the hope that the next session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, which would be taking place in Senegal, would set up a committee to monitor implementation of the Convention, and endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation (A/53/516, paragraph 12) regarding inclusion of the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies for 2000–2001 in the calendar of conferences and meetings for that biennium.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.